

**Article 2: Police — Police Regulations — Offenses Against Government**

**Division 52: Spectators Prohibited at Illegal Speed Contests  
or Exhibitions of Speed**

*(“Spectators Prohibited at Illegal Speed Contests  
or Exhibitions of Speed”*

*added 10-21-2002 by Emergency Ordinance O-19116 N.S.)*

*(Replaced by Ordinance O-19118 N.S. on 10-28-2002.)*

**§52.5201 Purpose**

The Council for the City of San Diego finds and declares that pursuant to California Vehicle Code section 23109, motor vehicle speed contests and exhibitions of speed conducted on public streets and highways are illegal. Motor vehicle speed contests and exhibitions of speed are more commonly known as street races or drag races. Streets within the City of San Diego have been the site of continuing and escalating illegal street racing over the past several years. Such street racing threatens the health and safety of the public, interferes with pedestrian and vehicular traffic, creates a public nuisance, and interferes with the right of private business owners to enjoy the use of their property within the City of San Diego. The illegal street races occur on a regular basis on various streets within the City. Hundreds of racers and spectators gather on these streets late at night and in the early morning hours, blocking the streets and sidewalks to traffic, forming a racetrack area, placing bets, and otherwise encouraging, aiding and abetting the racing process.

Illegal street racers accelerate to high speeds without regard to oncoming traffic, pedestrians, or vehicles parked or moving nearby. The racers drive quickly from street to street, race for several hours, and then move to other locations upon the arrival of the police. Those who participate in this illegal activity are very sophisticated, using their cell phones, police scanners, and other electronic devices to communicate with each other to avoid arrest. They also use the Internet to provide information on where to race, and give advice on how to avoid detection and prosecution. Traffic accidents, property crimes, and calls for police service have increased dramatically. In most cases, illegal street races attract hundreds of spectators. The mere presence of spectators at these events fuels the illegal street racing and creates an environment in which these illegal activities can flourish.

This division makes evidence of specified prior acts admissible to show the propensity of the defendant to be present at or attend illegal street races, if the prior act or acts occurred within three years of the presently charged offense.

This division is adopted to prohibit spectators at illegal street races with the aim of significantly curbing this criminal activity. The division targets a very clear, limited population and gives proper notice to citizens as to what activities are lawful and what activities are unlawful. In discouraging spectators, the act of organizing and participating in illegal street races will be discouraged.

(“Purpose” added 10-21-2002 by Emergency Ordinance O-19116 N.S.; replaced by O-19118 on 10-28-2002.)

## **§52.5202 Definitions**

*Illegal motor vehicle speed contest or illegal exhibition of speed* means any speed contest or exhibition of speed referred to in California Vehicle Code sections 23109(a) and 23109(c).

*Preparations for the illegal motor vehicle speed contest or exhibition of speed* include, but are not limited to, situations in which: (1) a group of motor vehicles or individuals has arrived at a location for the purpose of participating in or being *spectators* at the event; (2) a group of individuals has lined one or both sides of a public street or highway for the purpose of participating in or being a *spectator* at the event; (3) a group of individuals has gathered on private property open to the general public without the consent of the owner, operator, or agent thereof for the purpose of participating in or being a *spectator* at the event; (4) one or more individuals has impeded the free public use of a public street or highway by actions, words, or physical barriers for the purpose of conducting the event; (5) two or more vehicles have lined up with motors running for an *illegal motor vehicle speed contest or exhibition of speed*; (6) one or more drivers is revving his engine or spinning his tires in preparation for the event; or (7) an individual is stationed at or near one or more motor vehicles serving as a race starter.

*Spectator* means any individual who is present at an *illegal motor vehicle speed contest or exhibition of speed*, or at a location where *preparations* are being made for such activities, for the purpose of viewing, observing, watching, or witnessing the event as it progresses. *Spectator* includes any individual at the location of the event without regard to whether the individual arrived at the event by driving a vehicle, riding as a passenger in a vehicle, walking, or arriving by some other means.

(“Definitions” added 10-21-2002 by Emergency Ordinance O-19116 N.S.; replaced by O-19118 on 10-28-2002.)

## **§52.5203 Spectator at Illegal Speed Contest or Exhibitions of Speed - Violation**

- (a) Any individual who is knowingly present as a *spectator*, either on a public street or highway, or on private property open to the general public without

the consent of the owner, operator, or agent thereof, at an *illegal motor vehicle speed contest* or *exhibition of speed* is guilty of a misdemeanor subject to a maximum of six months in jail and a fine of \$1,000.

- (b) Any individual who is knowingly present as a *spectator*, either on a public street or highway, or on private property open to the general public without the consent of the owner, operator, or agent thereof, where *preparations* are being made for an *illegal motor vehicle speed contest* or *exhibition of speed* is guilty of a misdemeanor subject to a maximum of six months in jail and a fine of \$1,000.
- (c) An individual is present at the *illegal motor vehicle speed contest* or *exhibition of speed* if that individual is within 200 feet of the location of the event, or within 200 feet of the location where *preparations* are being made for the event.
- (d) Exemption: Nothing in this section prohibits law enforcement officers or their agents from being *spectators* at *illegal motor vehicle speed contests* or *exhibitions of speed* in the course of their official duties.

(“*Spectator at Illegal Speed Contest or Exhibitions of Speed - Violation*” added 10-21-2002 by Emergency Ordinance O-19116 N.S.; replaced by O-19118 on 10-28-2002.)

#### **§52.5204 Relevant Circumstances to Prove a Violation**

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, to prove a violation of Section 52.5203, admissible evidence may include, but is not limited to, any of the following:

- (a) the time of day;
- (b) the nature and description of the scene;
- (c) the number of people at the scene;
- (d) the location of the individual charged in relation to any individual or group present at the scene;
- (e) the number and description of motor vehicles at the scene;
- (f) that the individual charged drove or was transported to the scene;
- (g) that the individual charged has previously participated in an *illegal motor*

*vehicle speed contest or exhibition of speed;*

- (h) that the individual charged has previously aided and abetted an *illegal motor vehicle speed contest or exhibition of speed;*
- (i) that the individual charged has previously attended an *illegal motor vehicle speed contest or exhibition of speed;*
- (j) that the individual charged previously was present at a location where *preparations* were being made for an *illegal speed contest or exhibition of speed* or where an *exhibition of speed or illegal motor vehicle speed contest* was in progress.

*(“Relevant Circumstances to Prove a Violation” added 10–21–2002 by Emergency Ordinance O–19116 N.S.; replaced by O-19118 on 10-28-2002.)*

#### **§52.5205 Admissibility of Prior Acts**

The list of circumstances set forth in Section 52.5204 is not exclusive. Evidence of prior acts may be admissible to show the propensity of the defendant to be present at or attend an *illegal motor vehicle speed contest or exhibition of speed*, if the prior act or acts occurred within three years of the presently charged offense. These prior acts may always be admissible to show knowledge on the part of the defendant that a *speed contest or exhibition of speed* was taking place at the time of the presently charged offense. Prior acts are not limited to those that occurred within the City of San Diego.

*(“Admissibility of Prior Acts” added 10–21–2002 by Emergency Ordinance O–19116 N.S.; replaced by O-19118 on 10-28-2002.)*